

[p.150]

VII

THE FAMILY: A SYSTEM OF ROLES

1. HUSBAND AND WIFE

574 **T**he elementary family contains a number of different relationships and it will be convenient to say something about each of these in turn, always bearing in mind that these constituent relationships do not exist *in vacuo* but are mutually affected by each other and their position in the total complex of family relations of which they are part. There is some difficulty in writing about relations familiar in our own society. We are describing shades of difference and emphasis in relationships which are common to European society. But the importance of the elementary family group in the Sarakatsan community is so considerable that its constituent relationships merit attention.

581 One source of strength in the Sarakatsan marriage relation-
 885 ship is its complementary form. A man only participates fully in the community as the head of a household and the father of sons. Similarly, a woman realizes herself in marriage and motherhood. Only as the mother of adult sons does she, to a [585] degree, emancipate herself from male domination. To remain unmarried is failure and the admission of some grave moral or physical deficiency. Both the man and the woman, therefore, become mature social personalities in marriage directed to parenthood. And from a marriage that has been physically consummated there is no escape except in death.

594 The roles of husband and wife are complementary, and generally restrict each partner to a particular sphere of activity. The role of the husband is representative and protective. His work lies with the sheep, their management, and the disposal of their produce. He alone handles money, negotiates with officials, and takes definite decisions about the marriage alliances of his children. He also is the protector of his wife from rape and insult, and when she is sick he brings her medical and spiritual assistance.

The wife's role is domestic and expressive. Her activities centre in and around the huts where she cooks, spins, weaves,

593 age and generation provides a basis for the authority of the parents during the childhood and adolescence of their sons and daughters, an authority which is sanctioned both by social convention and the simple fact of power. But as the children of a family approach adult status, we have seen that parental authority becomes less assured, especially in father-son relations where the son's continued acceptance of his father's authority becomes increasingly conditional upon the father's tact in his attitude towards his son; and in the relationship between the mother and her adolescent son, where differences of sex and generation do not reinforce one another as is the case in the relationship between father and daughter.

593 The diminished authority of the father is the inevitable
562 outcome of his sons' assumption of adult status which, in this
585 community, is incompatible with subordination. Marriage completes the process by which a son asserts his individuality and after the establishment of his own family, his categorical obligations are centred in his family of marriage and not in his family of origin.

593 On the other hand, difference of sex provides the basis for a
562 radical separation of male and female roles in the family, which
462 is not confined to a clearly marked division of labour, but involves, also, more general sex-linked values which influence behaviour and attitudes. The activity of female roles is essentially confined to the house and they require passive, co-operative, and self-disciplined attitudes. Masculine roles are concerned with the management of the flocks and the representation of the family in the community. Since this wider participation is realized in terms of strife and rivalry, male roles demand extreme self-assertion in situations outside the family. Male and female spheres of action are mutually exclusive but they are also complementary. We have noted the complementary solidarity and mutual dependence which exist in the relationships between husband/father and wife/mother, father and daughter, mother and son, brother and sister. Further, the female sex is subordinate to the male sex. In adult relationships involving persons of opposite sex, the female owes obedience, the male protection to the other person. Only in the case of the relation between a mother and her adult married son does a woman in some degree escape the dominion of the male.

596 he loses strength. Since courage and physical strength are
 826 particularly the qualities that men require in order to defend
 828 the reputation of their families, it becomes clear why, for the
 [577] Sarakatsani, the honour of the family is literally the honour of
 its blood.

596 The solidarity of the family group restricts the expression of
 551 purely individual feelings, opinions, and personality. This is
 [159] reflected in the way that individual members are normally
 described by reference to the father, who until the marriage of
 his eldest son holds the chief authority. After her marriage a
 woman is never again addressed by her baptismal name except
 [553] when she visits the home of her birth. She takes instead the
 christian name of her husband to which the suffix '-ina' is
 [885] added; for instance, Periclina (see p. 70, above). In this way
 there is expressed not only the severance of a woman from her
 family of origin and her subordination to the authority of her
 husband, but also the absolute quality of their union. Similarly
 children of both sexes are known by their own christian name
 followed by the name of their father in the genitive case, for
 instance 'John the son of George'. In the eyes of its own members
 and the outside world, the family is a unity.

591 Whether we regard Sarakatsan marriage as a solemn contract
 between two opposed groups, or as a religious sacrament
 establishing the union of a youth with a maiden, it is certainly a
 transaction which transcends individual interests and desires.
 Just as the partners must be spotless (nobility in the boy,
 virginity in the girl), if the relationships which result from their
 union are to approach and participate in the qualities and
 nature of the divine model, so it is clear that either divorce or
 illegitimacy is incompatible with these values. To be born and
 to grow up in a complete and legitimate family is a minimal
 requirement for the honourable establishment of children.

596 In fact, divorce is permitted in Greece by the Orthodox
 Church on a number of grounds including adultery. Among
 the Sarakatsani I discovered only two instances of divorce;
 but in neither case had the marriage been consummated. In
 one instance, the father of the bridegroom advised his son not
 to have intercourse with the bride because she was coughing
 [239] and expectorating blood. The Sarakatsani are apprehensive
 of tuberculosis, and after eight days during which the girl's

156 that part of his personality which, shed of individual traits and
884 circumstances, relates him to the ideal type of manliness that
577 he has realized in dying for his honour. Dishonour can no longer
761 threaten the dead pallikari. He is free. And it is in their certain
knowledge of this that the women of his family will sing in their
dirge not only of their grief, but also of their pride.

156 After marriage the pallikari becomes the head of family.
885 Now the essential ability demanded of him is that he should
577 be an able protector of his family and his flock. Cleverness
(εἰσπράδα) is the quality which he must possess. It implies a
quickness of mind and a degree of foresight. Such a man is not
caught asleep or off his guard. It implies also the skill to plot
with guile and craft. This appreciation of cleverness is evident
in many stories and anecdotes which are told and retold around
the fire after the evening meal. There is the tale of the shepherd
who had scarcely returned to his huts with a stolen lamb when
he saw a detachment of police approaching along the path.
At once he threw the animal into a baby's cradle, covered it
with a blanket, and ordered his wife to undo her blouse and
give it the breast.

156 Lambros, the leader of a substantial co-operating 'company',
885 has a reputation for craftiness. In 1937, in the winter pastures,
577 he shared a grazing boundary with a family of Albanian
425 Muslims who owned a property of 250 acres. Foreseeing that
at some time in the future these Albanians might be expelled
from Greece, Lambros filed a statement with the court of
First Instance to the effect that he had held a lease of protected
rights over this property since 1929. At the time there was no
reason for the clerk to verify Lambros's statement, since any
attempt to implement a false statement would have been
repudiated with ease by the owners; and Lambros would have
faced a serious charge of perjury. Lambros's foresight was
justified in 1944 when the Muslims fled from Thesprotia.
He was now able to produce his document and in a few weeks
he was duly confirmed in his rights of protected lease over a
property which in fact he had never previously occupied. It is
this kind of subtlety that wins for a man the reputation for
cleverness.

577 It is conceded that a head of household must continually use
885 lies. Lies are not the same as purposeful cleverness, although

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they are obviously involved in it. But men lie as a matter of habit and principle to deny other people information. And it is one way of expressing their mutual hostility. A head of family who was sincere (εὐακρινής), or without cunning words (νόμιμος), would be considered foolish and neglectful of his duty. 577 885 [27]

This is not to say that the Sarakatsani fail to understand the virtues of truth and sincerity; indeed, relations between kinsmen, or between man and God, are based upon them. But between unrelated men the narrow limits of the human condition, particularly envy and poverty, prescribe opposite and meaner values. The essentially 'fallen' character of these relationships is implicit in linguistic usage. Κακός, 'bad or evil, is sometimes used to indicate a skilful man, especially in operations where cleverness or cunning is required. Πονηρός, which means cunning in the sense of the worker-out of evil, is very frequently used to describe a man like Lambros whose cleverness has to be grudgingly admitted and admired by other men. And, on the other hand, καλός, good, in contexts of character description often refers to a man who is merely weak and irresolute. 577 609 828 192

But the truly clever man does not give the impression that he is a threat to other men. Except where the interests of his family are critically at stake, he is careful to appear as honourable and well-intentioned towards unrelated men. There are, however, men who practise a small kind of cunning in all their actions. These persons are described as cunning in a sense that is wholly bad. Μάγκας, which means a cunning untrustworthy person, a bearer of mean and untrue scandals, is a word often applied to this kind of man. In the Sarakatsan imagination such a man is small, bent, thin featured, and with narrow close set eyes. The cunning of these men is not the intelligent cleverness of a Lambros, rather it resembles the sexual cunning of women. Both corrupt. The latter corrupts the nobility of men, the former society in general. Cleverness and cunning are legitimate and praiseworthy where their object is the protection or advancement of family interests, but not beyond these limits, or for their own sake. 156 577 828 [192] [26]

The heads of families whenever they are free from shepherding οὐδ

* Cf. Höeg, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 168.

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156 The heads of families whenever they are free from shepherding
 599 duties gather in the village square or the coffee-shop. On this
 571 public stage the chief representatives of the families of part of
 517 the total community appear, and by their attitude and bearing
 885 and the recognition and response they accord to one another
 they confirm or deny the ideal equality of one family with another. This equality is only maintained by a constant effort of self-assertion. A family head must strut about as if his affairs are of the greatest consequence. His expression is expected to be severe and proud. Modesty in these circumstances is no virtue but a sign of weakness. Ideally, the claims and assertions of other men must be at least equalled, and preferably surpassed. Yet care must be taken not to make a boast which can be proved to be empty. The boaster whose bluff has been called [521] is despised. Conversation has a sharp, monosyllabic, contrapuntal quality. It is concerned with self-assertion, not with communication or the exchange of information. On these occasions a man must on no account sit quietly in a corner [525] unspeaking (ἀμολήτος). To withdraw is to admit defeat. Card games often supplement the drinking and the conversation. Although they are games of chance rather than skill, they are acted out with great seriousness. As each man plays his card, this is struck down on to the table with the full force of his open [578] hand. Quarrels are frequent if one man wins too handsomely and makes facetious or boasting remarks to the losers.

Yet a man ought to combine with this competitive behaviour a generally sociable attitude. The essence of being one of a company (παρέα) is equal sharing. Each man in his turn is expected to buy a round of drinks for the others. Any hint of meanness is enough to brand a man as tight-fisted (σφιγμένος), a very serious charge. On the other hand, the man who moves to the other extreme, who spends lavishly and indiscriminately on entertaining others, or gambles recklessly at cards, is also condemned. Such people are known as wasteful spenders (σπατάλοι), without any sense of responsibility towards their families.

885 Caution, moderation, and self-restraint are the qualities
 156 demanded of the family head if he is to be a successful steward
 599 of his dependants' interests. We have already seen that in questions of honour the head of the family is unable to hazard himself as freely as his unmarried brother. For similar reasons

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the self-regard of the head of family is not so sensitive as that of the unmarried man. The man whose quick anger before marriage was approved as showing the spirit of the pallikari, is condemned as irrationally violent (*ζουρλός*) if, after his marriage, he draws a knife at the least imagined provocation. The underlying self-restraint of the head of the family, and the fact that the more volatile unmarried shepherds are isolated each with his own flock for the greater part of the year, contribute to a relative degree of peace and order in Sarakatsan communal life.

The family head must be able to cut a figure at a wedding or a village festival. At a feast he ought to be able to drink continuously without becoming either stupefied or aggressive. To fall asleep even after long hours of dancing, feasting, and drinking, is a mark of weakness. A repertoire of songs, and a proud upright bearing in the dance, are necessary for a man's social prestige. Similarly his clothes and appearance on these occasions are important. A man like Costas Pistiolis with his unkempt appearance, clothes fouled with dirt, and his inability to sing or dance, is a figure of mockery at the very few weddings he attends. Graceless (*ἀχάριστος*), and unnatural (*ἀβύσυχος*), is the verdict passed on this wretched man.

Finally, the degree of dependence on, or independence of, others is a factor which differentiates the prestige of heads of family. To be a tselingas, or a member of the dominant sibling group of a co-operative association of families, carries the greatest prestige. The dependence of a man without brothers on more distant kinsmen is by no means dishonourable, but it is clearly a situation of less prestige. But the family head who is forced to watch the sheep of another unrelated Sarakatsanos, or a villager, for a wage (*πόγα*) forfeits any pretension to social reputation. It suggests that he is so poor that he cannot live from his flock without the money supplement of the wage, or that he has no relatives with substantial flocks with whom he might co-operate, or that he is not acceptable to them. Customarily a shepherd's wage is paid only partly in money, the balance being given in kind, grain, and a pair of shoes for every six months of service. The galling feature of becoming a wage shepherd is the fact of dependence on an unrelated man and the sense of being a kept man.

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the pallikari, so the fact that she is not yet a wife and mother allows the maiden to cultivate her shame which lies in her seclusion from the outside world and the denial of her sexuality. This is scarcely possible for a married woman. Not only must she submit to her husband's sexual embraces but her practical duties take her to some extent into the world outside her huts.

The maiden's cultivation of her shame demands that her clothes hide her femininity. Her hair is hidden under a black cotton scarf. A girl who by artifice or accident allows her scarf to become frequently undone gains an evil reputation. The only concession to the display of the hair is that girls grow their hair long, plaited into pigtails. The length of these pig-tails, often artificially increased, is a point of pride and beauty. Thick, black, homespun blouses and woollen cardigans are buttoned to the neck and the wrists. The breasts are not supported and the shapeless bodice of the blouse effectively prevents the least hint of a provocative contour. A black woollen skirt is worn to the ankles. Generally as many as three thick underskirts are also worn under this. The general impression of the whole costume is one of shapelessness. The shame which is felt at the exposure of the body, even when no other person is present, means that undergarments are not changed for long periods and the body between the neck and the ankles is never washed. In contrast the hair is washed at least once a week and the face, hands, and feet once or twice each day.

After she reaches the age of sixteen or seventeen a maiden must discipline her movements. No movement even in domestic labour must be hurried. She ought to walk with a slow and deliberate step. In the dance she must not lift her feet more than an inch or two from the ground. A girl who is seen running risks ridicule and a reputation for shamelessness. If, by evil chance, she were to fall backwards 'with her legs in the air' (*aváxeλα*) she would virtually lose her honour. A girl should be proud but in a sense different from male pride. Thus she ought to be tall with an upright carriage, but with a gaze which is downcast, not level, and an expressive attitude which is directed inwards, not outwards.

A maiden ought to be secluded, as far as this is possible, from the gaze of the outside world. Not only does this guard her name against slander but, if she is unhealthy or ugly, it may

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884 help in deceiving possible suitors. But seclusion is also an
 156 element in the cultivation of sexual shame which is essentially
 577 hiding and turning inwards thought and facial expression which
 834 otherwise become a threat to her own honour and that of
 others. It is this knowledge of the powers of her sexuality that
 causes her, out of shame, to lower her eyes and withhold a
 greeting when she meets a man on a narrow path. It is often
 through the eyes that a woman lures a man to disaster. The

[27] attraction need not be consciously exercised. In keeping with
 these ideas unmarried girls over sixteen years of age go only
 twice a year to church to communicate, at Easter and at the
 feast of the Assumption. They are never guests at weddings
 which occur outside the immediate neighbourhood and they
 do not dance in public at village festivals. A girl in this age

[56] grade is never sent to draw water at the well or to collect

[29] firewood when a brother's wife is available. Ideally, she ought
 to spend most of her time preparing her dowry and weaving
 cloth at the wooden loom. Such tasks keep her out of the
 public gaze. If a girl is seen too often abroad it is soon suggested
 that she is being shown off to catch a husband. And in Sara-
 katsani thought it is shameful for a girl either personally, or
 through her family, to seek a man in marriage, or in any way
 to attempt to provoke his desire.

156 Necessarily, the married woman and mother is not able to
 577 have as much shame as the maiden. She cannot remain secluded.

834 From time to time she must leave the protective circle of the
 885 huts to fetch water and firewood, milk goats, and rescue her
 vagrant children. But this is not the same thing as saying that
 she may ever act in a shameless fashion. Her clothes must be

as modest as the unmarried girl's and her physical movements,
 if they need not be as subdued, must still be carefully controlled.
 A careful constraint is the quality she must display in her
 public appearances. The Greek word σωφροσύνη, prudence in
 the sense of an inner control of feeling and action, although I
 have never heard it used by Sarakatsani, seems to express
 exactly what is required of the married woman in this respect.
 Self-discipline is necessary precisely because she is allowed to
 move about more freely and with less supervision. She must
 appear modest (σεμνή) and serious in disposition (σοβαρή).

It may be remembered how the unrestrained joking of the wife
 of Pistoris provoked the criticism of other families.

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of Pistiolis provoked the criticism of other families. Women must never show emotion in public except where it is conventionally expected, as at a death. A married daughter meeting her father for the first time after a serious abdominal operation from which he had not been expected to recover, merely said in a matter of fact voice 'How are you, father?' A husband does not kiss his wife publicly even in farewell. Sarakatsani women must never shout in public to each other or their husbands as do the village women. In childbirth extreme fortitude is expected. The woman is given a blanket to bite so that she may not scream; and to guard against the possibility of outsiders hearing her groans the other women laugh and talk and, if necessary, beat tin cans. In general, any lack of self-restraint in conventional behaviour suggests that a woman may also be without self-control in respect to her sexual virtue.

There is no need to elaborate again the behaviour expected of a married woman in her roles within the family, qualities such as devotion, humility, and a readiness to co-operate with other women in the group. Physical strength and robustness, rather than fragile beauty, are the physical characters admired in a wife and mother. Without strength the woman is unlikely to survive for long the immense strain of her labours. Health is a question of deep concern for all Sarakatsani but especially for the married woman. To be sick is inexcusable, unless it is an illness that is easily diagnosed and rapidly curable.

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, the woman, especially the mother, expresses the moral solidarity of the family. Women become terrified when they see their men involved in a fight, moaning aloud in their anxiety and continually crossing themselves. But they are also quick to point the path of duty when men hesitate. The scorn of a wife, mother, or sister, is normally more than most men are able to tolerate. When a man has failed to act honourably a portion of the blame falls to the women of the family who are said to lack the courage to shame their men into the right course of action.

But it is in her family that the community chiefly judges the married woman. She must have sons, but one daughter is also desirable. Her own virtues and deficiencies will appear in her children, and upon the manliness of her sons and the shame of

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828 her daughters her reputation is dependent, just as the honour
577 of the children is itself contingent on the sexual virtue of their mother.

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596 The final stage of a woman's life is the period between the marriage of her eldest son and her death. She now gains a new freedom both from the authority of her husband, who retires about this time, and from the restrictions of social convention. She goes freely into shops to make small purchases for the family and may stop to pass the time of day with unrelated men she meets. With a young bride to do the heavy work about the hut she at last finds a respite from constant drudgery, and her sons treat her with a new-found respect as the mistress of [606] the extended family. Such an old woman should have a kind heart and treat the wives of her sons with firmness but justice. She is their moral guide and practical adviser, to whom they [844] turn in difficulty or doubt. At childbirth she is the midwife who delivers their children and gives them comfort and courage.

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597 The reputation of an old woman is already formed on the basis of her behaviour in earlier life. If she has passed through [554] her life without any questioning of her virtues, if she has sons who are manly, and if she has a kindly personality, the community probably approves of her. When she is above sixty [831] years of age, or if her husband is dead, the sexuality of woman is considered to be spent and she is said to have a 'clean soul' [794] (καθαρή ψυχή). Such a woman draws the water and kneads the bread which is taken to church at Easter. In these respects the prestige of some old women is considerable.

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754 But old women are also feared. Knowledge of magic techniques and remedial procedures for the evil eye are attributed [755] to them; and their curses are believed to be efficient *ex opere operato*. Where old women have a good name they use these skills in a socially approved manner to protect their families from spiritual dangers. But certain old women have a reputation for the evil and aggressive use of these powers. In these cases there are often allegations of dishonour in earlier life. A [784] woman who surrenders to lust loses her soul to the Devil and [704] remains his familiar. Envy is often the motive ascribed to [823] her. Typically she is the woman accused of magically impairing a bridegroom's potency because he did not seek the hand of her own daughter. The attribution of envy often rests on valid